Youth at Work in Canada

A Research Report

Canadian Council on Social Development

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INTRODUCTION

In Canada today, there are nearly two million young people aged 15 to 19, and they represent about seven per cent of the total population. In growing numbers, Canada's youth are staying in school, but a significant proportion are combining school with part-time work. Recent public attention has focused on the issue of youth unemployment, which is usually based on statistics for the broader age group of 15- to 24-year-olds. This report sets out to review the existing literature and survey data about young peoples' experiences with work in Canada, looking specifically at the 15- to 19-year-old age group.

In Section One, the pattern of young people's entry into the labour force is reviewed. The data indicate that young people's employment is very sensitive to the business cycle, and it is also affected by structural changes in the economy. The proportion of teenagers who have never held a job has been growing in the 1990s, as a result of both the recession during the first part of the decade and changes in the nature of the jobs being created. Many low-skilled and manual jobs have been lost in the 1990s, and the new jobs being created frequently require high levels of skills – a factor that appears to be making it harder for teens in their high school years to find paid work.

Section One also reviews differences in employment patterns among teens. Teenagers in middle- and high-income families are more likely to have a job than their peers in lower-income families – possibly due to advantages such as family connections and access to transportation to get to a job. As well, children of self-employed parents more frequently find jobs than do those whose parents are paid employees. Immigrant youth are significantly less likely than Canadian-born youth to have had any work experience. Volunteer work is a growing trend among young people, and it is helping about one-quarter of the young volunteers to find paid jobs.

Where teens live in Canada also affects their likelihood of employment. Teens in more prosperous regions such as the Prairies and British Columbia are far more likely to have held a job than teens living in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec and Ontario. And young people in large cities have lower rates of employment experience than young people in smaller urban centres or rural areas.

Section Two presents information about the types of work that young people engage in and their average earnings. Statistics indicate that over their teen years, young people move from less formal types of employment – such as babysitting and snow shovelling – to more formal jobs with employers offering minimum wages and other legal protections under provincial and federal labour codes. There are significant differences in the types of work that young men and young women perform. Young women are highly segregated into care-giving and sales and service jobs, but young men are found in a wide variety of occupations, including sales, service and blue collar jobs. Among older teens, wage rates for young men are higher compared to those of young women.

Section Three reviews information about the extent of employment among teen students and its effects on their school achievement. There has been a marked increase in the number of young people staying in school and for longer periods of time. For instance, in 1995 approximately 75 per cent of 18-year-olds were in school, while in 1981, only about half of this group were still students. Over the last two decades, the

employment rate among full-time students peaked in 1989, at about 40 per cent, and since then it has declined to less than 30 per cent. Nearly 60 per cent of part-time teen students hold jobs, a similar rate to that of 1981 and down by about 10 percentage points since 1989. The total number of students with jobs in 1997 was 470,000.

A review of the literature on the effects of balancing work and school suggests that students whose weekly work does not exceed 15 to 20 hours tend to perform as well as or better than their peers who are full-time students. But drop-out rates rise and grades fall for students working more than 20 hours per week. This is not a concern for the majority of Canadian students who hold jobs, because they work less than 15 hours per week. However, about 16 per cent of older teens (or 92,000) do work more than 15 hours each week, and they are therefore at risk of falling behind in their education. A concern that affects even more students is the significant drop in their rate of summer employment – down from nearly 65 per cent in 1989 to about 45 per cent in 1997. Given young peoples' needs and wishes to gain work experience, acquire spending money, or save for their college education, the falling rate of student summer employment signals an alarm.

Section Four presents information about the impact of working on young people's health and well-being. The data indicate that students who hold jobs are as physically active as their peers without jobs. In fact, young female students with jobs are more likely to exercise regularly than those who study only. However, rates of smoking and alcohol consumption are higher among teen students with jobs than they are among teens who do not have employment. An important concern raised by researchers is that longer working hours may rush teens into 'pseudo adulthood,' leading them to engage in behaviours that are potentially dangerous, without having the responsibility and perspective that is developed in adulthood. On the other hand, positive effects of working are also cited, such as equipping youth with essential skills for adulthood, including punctuality, personal responsibility, and the ability to relate to people outside of their peer group.

This publication, presented as a companion report to *The Progress of Canada's Children 1998*, helps document one of the central challenges facing Canada's young people today – gaining job experience and education to equip themselves for their future prosperity, while living through a time of profound economic change and insecurity.

SECTION ONE – ENTERING THE PAID LABOUR FORCE

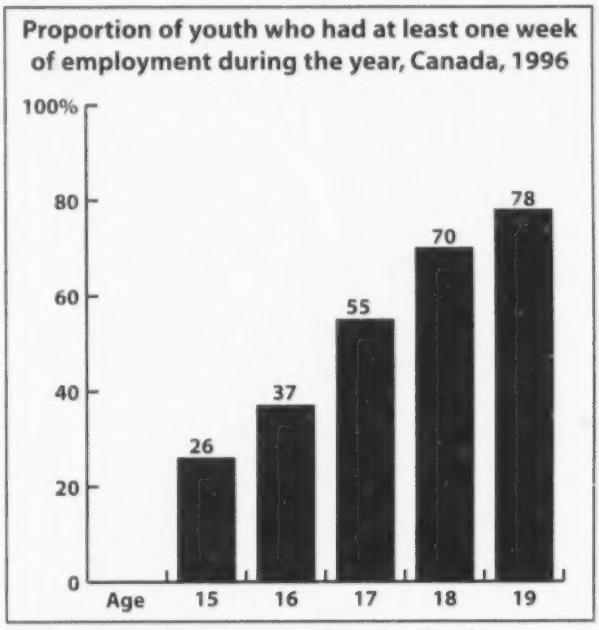
Entry into the paid labour force is one of the important changes that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. As youth progress from pre-teen to early teenage years, their chances of employment increase and their job options widen.[1] However, opportunities for young adults to find paid work are linked closely to the state of the economy. In periods of economic recession, a significantly higher proportion of youth are unemployed than during periods of economic growth. The drop in job opportunities for youth has been particularly marked through the 1990s and has remained poor through the latter part of the decade, despite economic growth and improved labour market conditions for adults.

At what age do young people enter the labour force in Canada?

Between the ages of 15 and 19, the majority of young people bring home their first pay cheque. As shown in Figure 1, about one-quarter of all 15-year-olds – or 104,000 of them – worked for pay for at least one week in 1996. The proportion of young people who held a job for at least one week rose steadily with each additional year of age. Among 17-year-olds, 55 per cent had some paid work experience, and among 19-year-olds, nearly 80 per cent, or 286,000, earned money from employment. Although statistics on 13- and 14-year-olds are unavailable, the trend in Figure 1 suggests that less than one quarter of that age group had any employment in 1996.[2]

While some researchers have suggested that the majority of youth between the ages of 12 and 16 have paid employment,[3] the evidence in Figure 1 does not support this claim. In 1996, only one-quarter of 15-year-olds and 37 per cent of 16-year-olds had any paid employment. One reason why fewer young teens had paid employment that year than in previous years was the significant change that occurred in the economic climate during the 1980s and 1990s.

Figure 1



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

Business cycle is an important influence

As indicated in Table 1, the employment activities of youth are very sensitive to the business cycle. During periods of past economic expansion, the proportion of youth who participated in paid employment increased significantly, while during periods of economic contraction, the proportion declined. Between 1984 and 1989, the Canadian economy went through a period of growth. The national unemployment rate declined from 11.3 to 7.5 per cent, and the proportion of youth who worked during these years rose dramatically. For example, the share of 16-year-olds who had paid employ-

Table 1. Per cent of youth with at least one week of employment during the year, Canada, selected years

Age	1981	1984	1989	1996	Percentage-point change	
					1984 to 1989	1989 to 1996
15	39	38	49	26	+11	-23
16	53	52	68	37	+16	-31
17	70	65	76	55	+11	-21
18	80	77	86	70	+9	-16
19	86	85	89	78	+4	-11
Total	66	64	74	53	+10	-21

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

ment during the year jumped from slightly more than half to just over two-thirds – an increase of 16 percentage points. Large changes in employment rates were also evident among teens of other ages.

1990S MORE DIFFICULT FOR TEEN EMPLOYMENT

"You can't be motivated when you know there is no opportunity to work. I know that it is hardest to be motivated myself when I don't know whether there will be a job when I'm done." (Tom, 23)

"What scares me is that there are people with two or three degrees who are still working in retail." (Stephanie, 23)

"Jobs are the biggest problem in Cape Breton, even for people our age." (Rebecca, 17)

"If there are government employment counselling programs out there for us, not many people know about them, if anyone does." (Amanda, 18)

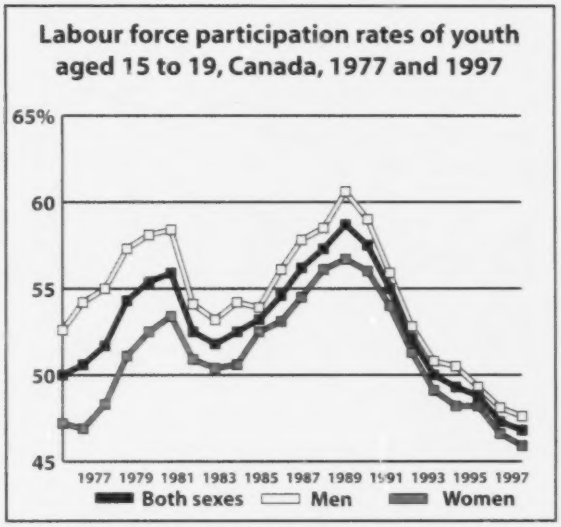
In the early 1990s, the economy turned downward and the job situation for youth changed significantly. Between 1989 and 1996, the share of youth who worked during the year declined by 21 percentage points. The decline was particularly large among youth aged 15 to 17, dropping by 20 to 30 percentage points.

The diminishing labour market involvement of youth is also evident in the stark decline in their labour force participation rates. Almost 60 per cent of youth were either working or seeking work in 1989, but that proportion dropped below 50 per cent by 1997 (see Figure 2). In spite of the economic recovery between 1993 and 1997, the youth labour force participation rate continued to decline, and it now stands at its lowest point in 25 years. This decline may reflect changing attitudes among youth and a decision not to work, or it may be due to diminished job opportunities for young people. The latter appears to be a more compelling explanation. By 1997, the teen unemployment rate exceeded 20 per cent and surpassed the level it had been during the depths of the recession (see Figure 3). By contrast, unemployment rates among adults declined by one to two percentage points between 1992 and 1997. When asked about their employment prospects during recent small group discussions, youth often expressed feelings of frustration and discouragement.[4]

STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC CHANGES ARE ALSO HARMING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

The ups and downs of the business cycle have a large effect on young people's employment opportunities. Youth are often the first to be fired at the onset of an economic downturn and they are generally the last group to experience improvements in their labour market prospects during a period of recovery. This was particularly so during the early 1990s, as that recession hit youth harder than other recessions since the 1970s.[5] But it also appears that more fundamental changes in the economy are altering young people's job prospects.

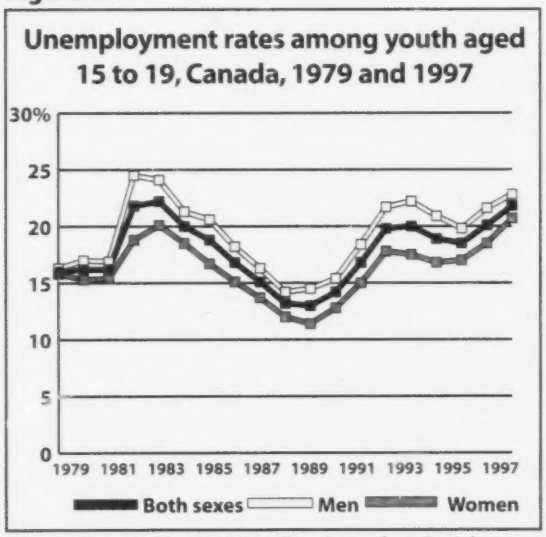
Figure 2



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Annual Averages, selected years.

In the latter half of the 1990s, when the economy started to rebound, corporate downsizing and government restructuring continued – creating barriers to young people wishing to enter the job market.[6] As well, technological changes in the 1990s, particularly the expansion of the information highway, are creating a growing demand for highly skilled and educated workers. Meanwhile, significant numbers of low-skilled and manual jobs are being eliminated, particularly in goods-producing industries. The impacts of the recession and technological change are felt more strongly by youth than by adults, as evident in the widening employment gap between the two groups since the beginning of 1990s.[7]

Figure 3



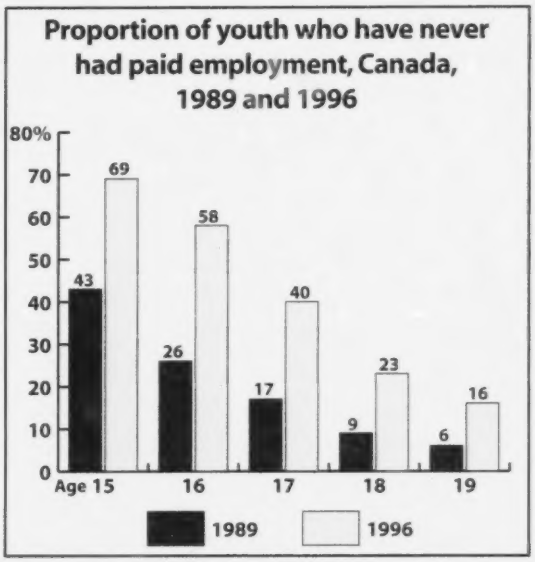
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Annual Averages, selected years.

NUMBER OF YOUTH WITHOUT ANY JOB EXPERIENCE GROWS

One of the implications of this changing employment picture is that the proportion of youth who have never held a job is far higher now than it was in the 1980s. For example, in 1989, only one-quarter of all 16-year-olds had never had a paying job; by 1996, this proportion had more than doubled, rising to 58 per cent. Large increases were also evident among 15-year-olds and youth aged 17 to 19 (see Figure 4). Overall, youth who reached their early to mid-teens during the 1990s were less likely to have ever had a paying job than were teens in previous decades.

There are both short-term and potentially long-term implications for youth in these statistics. In the short term, young people's ability to earn spending money after school and during the summer is reduced. Indeed, less than half of all youth aged 15 to 19 had employment during the summer of 1997, down from two-thirds in 1989. Moreover, the ability

Figure 4



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

of youth to find employment may be weakened by their lack of work experience, aggravating an already difficult situation.[8] In the long term, their introduction to a positive labour market experience is postponed, potentially harming their ability to perform well in the labour market in later years.[9]

> *"I worry that I won't have enough money to go to school because I really want to have a good job."* (Sunshine, 13)
>
> *"I really could use a work placement. They aren't available in my university program and I think it really hurts my chances of getting a good job later."* (Jean, 24)
>
> *"In high school, everyone saw guidance counsellors and did tests to find out what we were suited for, but we couldn't relate to what all the jobs were about."* (Anand, 24)

WHY ARE SOME TEENS MORE ABLE THAN OTHERS TO FIND JOBS?

As we have seen, the state of the economy has a significant impact on whether or not young people can find a job. But economic conditions are not the whole story. The likelihood of a teenager having a job is influenced by many factors, such as where they live, what their parents do for a living, and their family income level.

MOST YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE WITH THEIR PARENTS

The vast majority of teens live with their parents, and most young people remain in the family home until they are in their twenties.[10] In 1996, only about 10 per cent of 18-year-olds did not live with their parents, and only about 20 per cent of 19-year-olds no longer lived at home. Older teens living on their own were less likely to be in school and slightly more likely to be employed than teens who still lived with their parents.

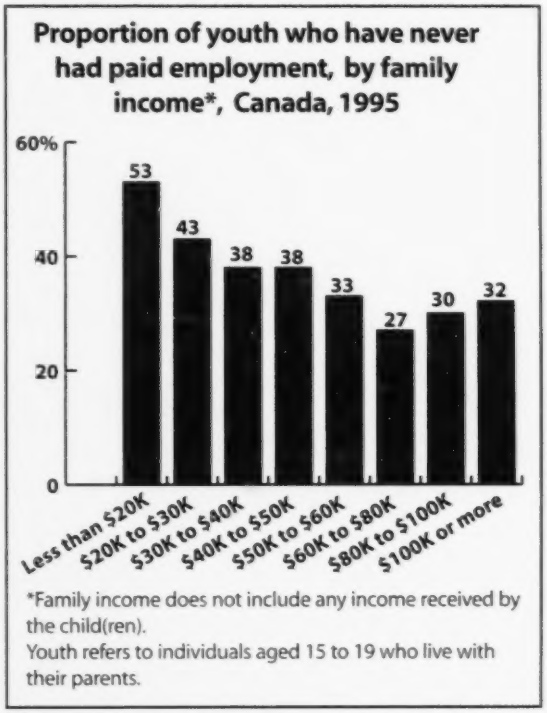
YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOWER-INCOME FAMILIES LESS LIKELY TO WORK

For teens living at home, their chances of having a job are influenced by the socio-economic status of their parents. While it might be expected that young people from lower-income families are more likely than their peers in middle- or upper-income families to work in order to supplement the family income, the opposite is true. A larger proportion of Canadian youth from middle- and upper-income families have had work experience compared to youth in lower-income families. This was also the case in the United States.[11] As shown in Figure 5, just over half of all young people in Canada

living in families with annual incomes below $20,000 had no work experience in 1995. In contrast, young people from more affluent homes were more likely to have had a job at some point, as more than two-thirds of youth in families with incomes of $50,000 or more had previous work experience.

The disparity in rates of job experience between low- and high-income youth may be because young people living in lower-income families face more constraints in seeking paid work than do their peers in middle- and upper-income families. Advantages such as job contacts through parents and their acquaintances, and access to transportation to a job may be more readily available to youth in middle- and upper-income families than to their poorer contemporaries.

Figure 5



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

TEENS WITH SELF-EMPLOYED PARENTS

Young people living in households where one or both parents are self-employed are more likely to have work experience than youth whose parents are paid employees. About 70 per cent of all youth aged 15 to 19 living with at least one self-employed parent had prior labour force experience, compared to 62 per cent of all teens whose parents were paid employees. A number of factors may account for this. For example, youth with self-employed parents may enter the labour force at an earlier age because they participate in the family business and work alongside their parents. Youth with self-employed parents may also have a greater range of employment opportunities open to them as a result of their parents' contacts within the business community. Finally, youth with self-employed parents may be more

Table 2. Youth living with parents who are self-employed, Canada, 1995

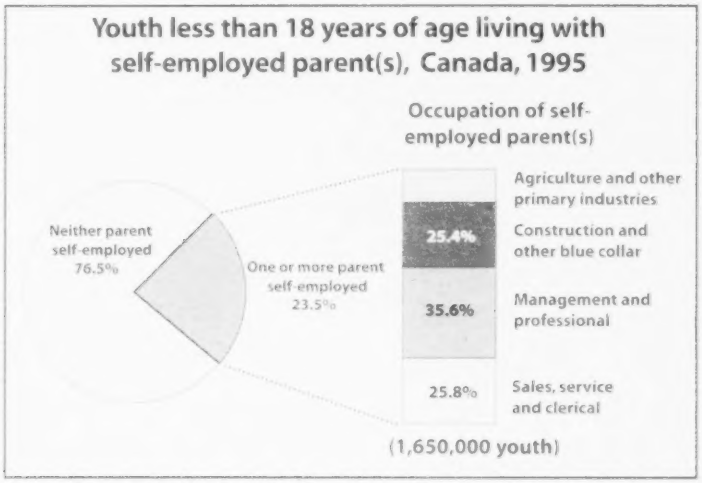
Youth	Neither parent self-employed	One or more parent(s) self-employed	Total
Up to age 17	76% 5,364,000	24% 1,650,000	100% 7,014,000
Up to age 11	77% 3,613,000	23% 1,057,000	100% 4,670,000
Aged 12 to 15	75% 1,186,000	25% 405,000	100% 1,591,000
Aged 16 to 17	75% 565,000	25% 188,000	100% 752,000

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

likely than others to seek out paid employment because such values as entrepreneurship and assertiveness are taught within the home.

The proportion of children and youth who live with self-employed parents gives us some indication of the number who may be involved in family-run businesses. As shown in Table 2, about one-quarter of all young people up to age 17 live with a self-employed parent, accounting for 1,650,000 youth. The proportion is similar for youth in specific age groups, for example, among those aged 12 to 15.

Figure 6


Youth less than 18 years of age living with self-employed parent(s), Canada, 1995
Occupation of self-employed parent(s)
Neither parent self-employed 76.5%
One or more parent self-employed 23.5%
25.4%
35.6%
25.8%
Agriculture and other primary industries
Construction and other blue collar
Management and professional
Sales, service and clerical
(1,650,000 youth)

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

Of course, the likelihood of working in a family business depends largely on the nature of the business. For example, one would expect children living on family farms to be far more likely to work alongside their parents compared to children living with a parent who is a self-employed lawyer or dentist. Figure 6 shows the occupations of self-employed parents. The largest share of these parents are employed in professional and managerial occupations, for example, as accountants, doctors and lawyers. One-quarter are employed in clerical, sales and service occupations, such as insurance and real estate agents, and another one-quarter are employed in blue collar jobs, such as carpenters, electricians and truck drivers. The smallest share of self-employed parents work in agricultural and other primary occupations, such as fishers and loggers.

Overall, only about three per cent of all Canadian children live with parents who are engaged in agricultural and other primary occupations. Most live with parents who are not self-employed. Among the children and youth who do live with self-employed parents, the largest share of parents are employed in professional and managerial occupations.

IMMIGRANT YOUTH ARE LESS LIKELY THAN CANADIAN-BORN TEENS TO WORK, BUT MORE LIKELY TO STUDY

Cultural heritage is another factor related to young people's tendency to enter the job market. Youth who came to Canada as immigrants are far less likely to have work experience than those who are Canadian-born. For example, among youth aged 15 to 16, 77 per cent of those who immigrated to Canada had no prior work experience by 1996, compared to 62 per cent of teens who were born in Canada (see Figure 7). And among teens aged 17 to 19, the share of immigrants with no prior work experience is twice that of teens born in Canada. Immigrant youth may be at a disadvantage in finding work due to their lack of family contacts in business, their efforts to learn one of Canada's official languages, their responsibilities at home, or their families' expectations that they focus solely on school work.

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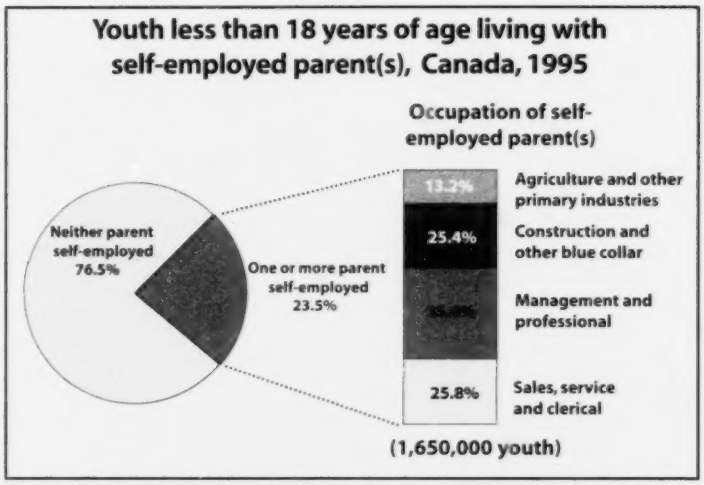
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Agriculture and other primary industries
25.4%
Construction and other blue collar
Management and professional
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Sales, service and clerical
(1,650,000 youth)

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

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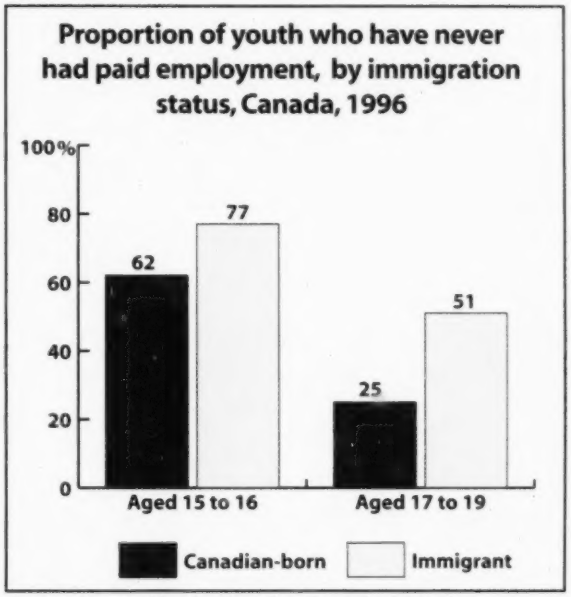
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES HELP YOUNG PEOPLE FIND JOBS

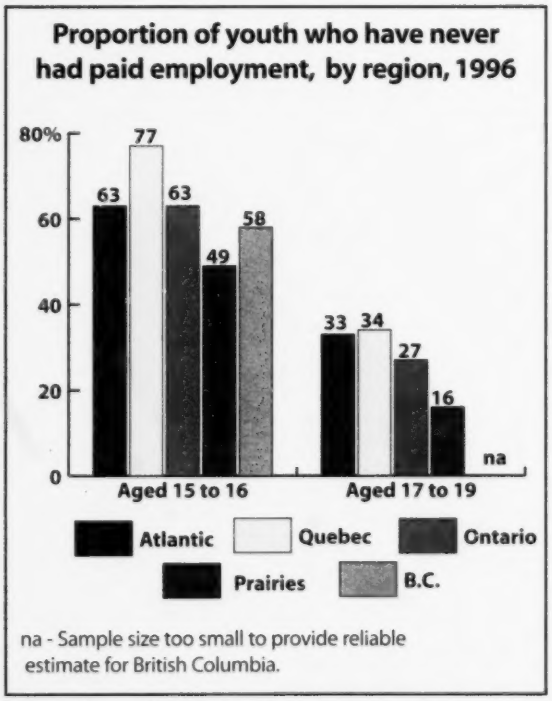
Volunteer work helps young people break into the job market. Between 1987 and 1997, the rate of volunteering among young people aged 15 to 24 nearly doubled – from 18 per cent to 33 per cent, making this age group's volunteer participation rate the highest among all adults.[12] Canvassing, campaigning, fundraising, and teaching or coaching activities were the most popular forms of volunteering for young people. The most common reasons cited by young people for volunteering were to improve their job opportunities, explore their own abilities, and use their skills. About 65 per cent of young unemployed people thought that volunteering would improve their job opportunities, and among young people who were employed, nearly one-quarter reported that their volunteer activities had helped them to get the job. This rate was 10 points higher than for the entire adult working-age population of volunteers.

Figure 7



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

Figure 8



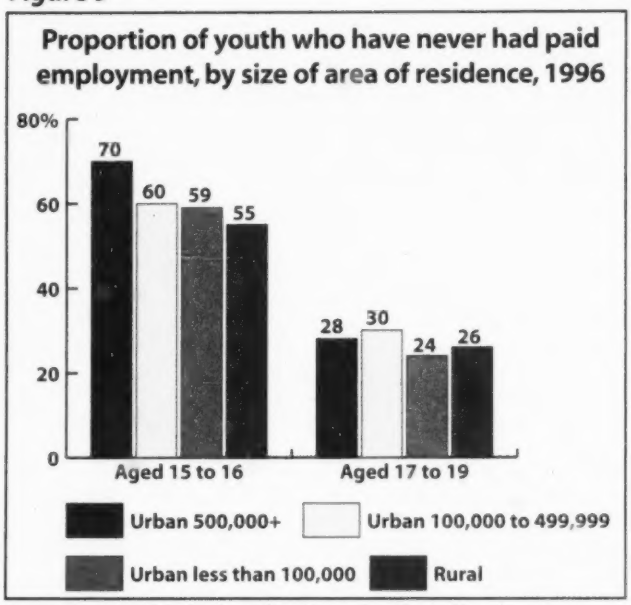
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Young people's chances of finding paid work are also related to the economic prosperity of the region in which they live, and there are considerable differences across Canada. Between 1979 and 1996, employment conditions for youth aged 15 to 19 were better in Ontario and the western provinces than in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. Throughout this period, labour force participation rates among teens in Ontario, British Columbia, and the Prairies were higher than the rates in Quebec and the Atlantic region.[13] However, teen employment rates have dropped in all regions during the 1990s, particularly in Ontario, suggesting that job experience is becoming more difficult to acquire for youth in all parts of Canada.

Figure 8 shows the different levels of success that young people have had finding work in their region. The share of young people who have never had a job is highest in Quebec, followed by the Atlantic region and Ontario. Young people living in the West are most likely to have had paid employment at some time in the past. This is, in part, because more of these teens live with self-

Figure 9



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

employed parents, compared to teens in other regions. However, there also appears to be a greater availability of other forms of work for young people on the Prairies, as evident in the teens' relatively low unemployment rates there.

TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS OFFER MORE WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEENS THAN LARGE CITIES

Given that the vast majority of economic activity now occurs in large cities, one might expect that urban teens would be more likely to have paid employment than their counterparts in smaller towns and rural areas. In fact, the reverse is true. Teens in large cities, especially those under age 17, are less likely to have had a job than teens living in smaller urban centres and rural areas. For example, among youth aged 15 to 16, 70 per cent of those in large cities had no prior work experience, compared to about 60 per cent of the same age group living in smaller centres. Youth in rural areas were the most likely of all teens to have had prior work experience.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT RATES VARY WIDELY FROM CITY TO CITY

For teens living in Canada's largest urban areas, the city in which they live affects their likelihood of having a job. Figure 10 shows the share of teens in selected Canadian cities who had no paid employment in 1995. Teens in Chicoutimi-Jonquière were the least likely to have had paid work – 70 per cent of teens aged 15 to 19 were without employment during the year. Teens living in Trois-Rivières, St. John's, Quebec and Montreal also experienced low rates of employment – more than 60 per cent in each of those cities lacked a job. On the other hand, teens living in Victoria, St. Catharines-Niagara and Regina were the most likely to have had paid work. Nearly 60 per cent of teens living in those areas held a job at some point in 1995. Not surprisingly, rates of adult unemployment in Regina and Victoria were also among the lowest, and among the highest in cities in Quebec and in St. John's, reflecting differences in the general economic well-being of those cities.

Figure 10

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's 1996 Census.

SECTION TWO - TEENS' WORK AND EARNINGS

The type of work that young people do and the amount of earnings they receive shift throughout their teen years. For most children and youth, their first exposure to the labour market is through babysitting, delivering newspapers or performing home-based chores such as snow-shovelling. According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, about one-quarter of children aged 10 to 11 have such jobs. Informal employment is prevalent among young teens as well. Over one-third of 15-year-olds and almost one-fifth of 16-year-olds with employment are classified in official surveys as "self-employed," a category that includes individuals who babysit or deliver newspapers. By the time they reach age 17, most teen workers have become employees in the formal sector of the economy, where they are subject to legal provisions set out in minimum wage legislation and federal and provincial labour codes.

Table 3. Youth aged 15 to 19, by employment status, Canada, 1996

Age	Paid worker	Self-employed	Unpaid family worker	Total
15	61	35	na	100%
16	81	17	na	100%
17	89	10	na	100%
18	94	5	na	100%
19	96	na	na	100%
Total	88	11	1.1	100%

na - Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate.
Note: In the Survey of Consumer Finances, individuals who undertake such tasks as babysitting and newspaper delivery are defined as "self-employed."
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES SHIFT AS TEENS GROW OLDER

The size of the firm in which young people work also reflects the shift in the nature of youth employment over their teen years. The majority of younger teens work in small firms – nearly two-thirds work for companies with fewer than 20 employees. Among older teens, a somewhat larger proportion work in medium-sized firms of

Table 4. Distribution of employed youth, by size of firm and age group, Canada, 1997

Size of firm	Youth aged 15 to 16	Youth aged 17 to 19
Less than 20 employees	62	52
20 to 99 employees	30	35
100 or more employees	8	13
Total	100%	100%

Note: Does not include self-employed youth.
Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

20 to 100 employees, or in large firms with more than 100 employees. Overall, these figures suggest that a teen's first job is likely to be in a small establishment such as a corner store or other family-run business, but as they get older they are more likely to find work in large fast-food chains, retail stores or other large job sites.

WORK EXPERIENCES ARE DIFFERENT FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

There are significant differences in the types of work performed by young men and young women. Of all young women aged 15 to 16 who had employment during 1996, more than one-third were self-employed – most likely as babysitters – while just over 10 per cent of the young men this age were self-employed. The variation in these rates continues as teens grow older. In spite of the huge influx of adult women into the labour force in recent decades, it would appear that the traditional roles – women as family caregivers and men as workers outside the home – affect the work patterns of girls and boys, beginning with their first exposure to paid employment.

Table 5. Youth aged 15 to 19, by employment status and gender, Canada, 1996

	Paid worker	Self-employed	Unpaid family worker	Total
Aged 15 to 16				
Men	84	13	na	100%
Women	62	36	na	100%
Aged 17 to 19				
Men	95	4	na	100%
Women	92	8	na	100%

na - Sample size too small to provide reliable estimate.
Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 1997.

Table 6. Distribution of employed youth, by occupation, age group and gender, Canada, 1997

	Aged 15 to 16			Aged 17 to 19		
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes
Services	27	40	32	26	35	30
Sales	14	15	15	14	20	17
Clerical	na	22	13	9	24	16
Blue collar	45	15	32	44	11	28
Mgmt./Professional	na	na	8	7	10	9
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

na - Sample size too small to provide reliable estimate.
Note: Does not include self-employed youth.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 1997.

Beyond differences in the rates of self-employment between young women and men, there are also striking differences in the types of work they do when engaged as paid employees. Among younger teens, 41 per cent of the boys with jobs work in services and sales – in stores, restaurants and fast-food outlets. Another 45 per cent work in blue collar jobs – on farms, construction sites and in warehouses, for example. By contrast, almost two-thirds of young women aged 15 to 16 who are paid employees work in service and clerical jobs, and only negligible numbers are employed in blue collar jobs.

These gender differences in work patterns are also evident among older teens. About half of male teens aged 17 to 19 work in sales, service and clerical jobs, and just over 40 per cent work in blue collar occupations. By contrast, about 70 per cent of employed female teens aged 17 to 19 work in service, sales and clerical jobs. The proportions of both young men and women in managerial and professional categories are small.

HOW MUCH MONEY DO TEENS EARN?

The hourly wages earned by teens tend to be low. This is not surprising, given their lack of previous work experience and training. As they get older, however, teens' wages improve. Only about 40 per cent of teens aged 15 to 16 earn $7 or more per hour, but over 50 per cent of older teens are in that wage category.

Table 7. Distribution of employed youth, by hourly wage rates, age group and gender, Canada, 1997

	Aged 15 to 16			Aged 17 to 19		
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes
Hourly wage:						
Less than $6.00	19	23	21	10	15	12
$6.00 to $6.99	35	38	37	32	36	34
$6.99 to $7.99	29	30	29	30	33	32
$8.00 or more	17	na	13	28	16	22
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

na - Sample size too small to provide reliable estimate.
Note: Does not include self-employed youth.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 1997.

Most employed youth aged 15 to 16 earn less than $100 per week, and the vast majority earn less than $200 a week. The weekly earnings of older teens are somewhat higher. Although the distribution of weekly earnings is similar for young men and women aged 15 to 16, it diverges for older teens. There are more young men than women aged 17 to 19 in the higher wage-earning brackets: 41 per cent of young men earn $200 or more per week, compared to about 25 per cent of young women. This is due to differences in the types of work performed and in the average number of hours worked by young men and women.

Table 8. Distribution of employed youth, by weekly earnings, age group and gender, Canada, 1997

	Aged 15 to 16			Aged 17 to 19		
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Men	Women	Both sexes
Weekly earnings:						
Less than $100	61	68	64	29	40	34
$100 to $199	24	26	25	30	35	32
$200 to $299	na	na	na	22	19	21
$300 to $399	na	na	na	12	5	8
$400 or more	na	na	na	7	na	5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

na - Sample size too small to provide reliable estimate.
Note: Does not include self-employed youth.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 1997.

Only a small proportion of young people are unionized – about 10 per cent – and few are entitled to participate in workplace benefits such as health or dental plans – about 7 per cent. That is because most young workers are employed part-time, they have held their jobs for relatively short periods of time, and they are employed in small firms, often in the service economy. Each of these factors is associated with low rates of unionization and lack of access to benefits.

SECTION THREE - WORK AND SCHOOL

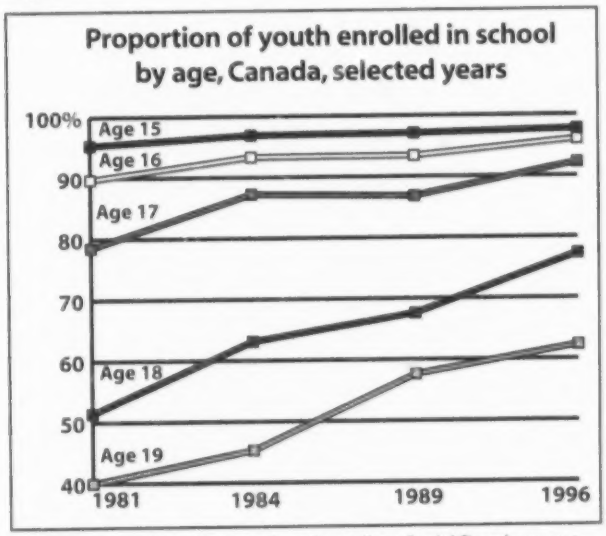
Completing high school is the key to reducing unemployment among youth. Particularly in today's labour market, dropping out of high school is "a prescription for employment in low-skilled, low-paid jobs with few promotion prospects, and the likelihood of recurrent periods of unemployment."[14] Youth are aware of this link between education and good jobs: enrolment rates in educational institutions have increased noticeably through the 1980s and 1990s, as shown in Figure 11. While the rate of school attendance among youth aged 15 to 16 has remained nearly constant – at close to 100 per cent – increases in enrolment rates have been marked among older teens over the last 15 years. For example, the share of 18-year-olds enrolled in school increased from approximately 50 per cent to 75 per cent between 1981 and 1996, while the share of 19-year-olds in school increased from about 40 per cent to just over 60 per cent.

> ***"If you want a job, you have to get more education."*** **(Rebecca, 17)**
>
> ***"There are less jobs now, but if you go to university there are more options."*** **(Ben, 14)**
>
> ***"The older you get, the pressure gets harder on you, and it's hard to get jobs with no experience."*** **(Kenny, 13)**
>
> ***"I want to take a year off to make money so I don't have to borrow to go to school."*** **(Donelle, 14)**

Young people's awareness of the link between post-secondary education and future employment prospects was evident in recent youth focus groups.

In 1997, about 30 per cent of all full-time students aged 15 to 19 had paid employment, and just under 60 per cent of part-time students had employment. Older students were more likely to have had a job than their younger counterparts.

Figure 11



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

As shown in Figure 12, the share of students who balance their school work with paid employment varies over the business cycle. The proportion of full-time students who also had jobs reached a high of about 40 per cent in 1989, and the rate has declined steadily since then. In absolute terms, there were approximately 1.6 million full-time students aged 15 to 19 in 1997, of whom approximately 470,000 had paid employment.

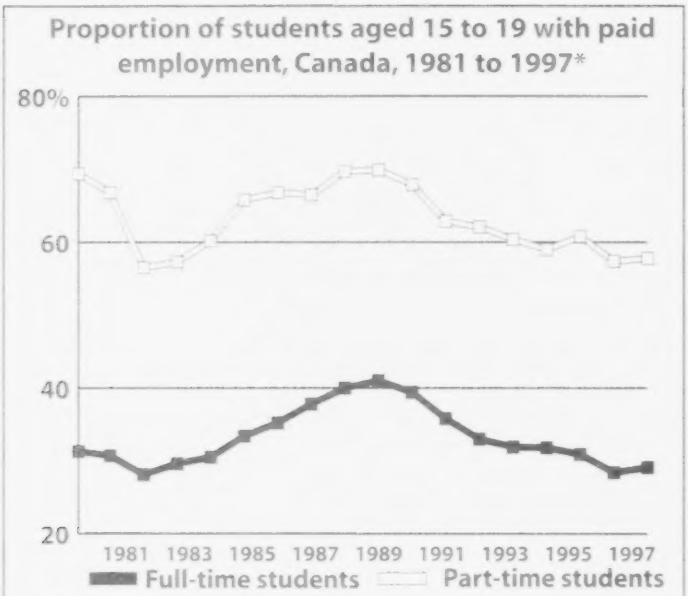
Overall, the proportion of youth today who combine work and school is about the same as it was in the early 1980s. The proportion of youth who are students without jobs has risen, and the proportion of young people who have left school and found work has dropped dramatically – from 21 to nine per cent.

The Effect of Employment on School Achievement

According to research on the issue of school and work, the effect of employment on school performance varies depending on the number of hours each week that students spend working. As long as their work does not exceed 20 hours per week, employment does not appear to impede a student's school performance. In fact, studies in Ontario and Quebec have shown that students who work 15 hours or less per week generally perform well academically[9], and students who work less than 19 hours per week are less likely to drop out of school than their peers without jobs.

These findings are supported by American research showing that students who work less than 20 hours per week do not appear to suffer in their Grade Point Average (GPA).[10] However, the same researchers found that students who work more than 20 hours per week have poor academic results, evident in lower GPAs compared to those of students who are not employed.

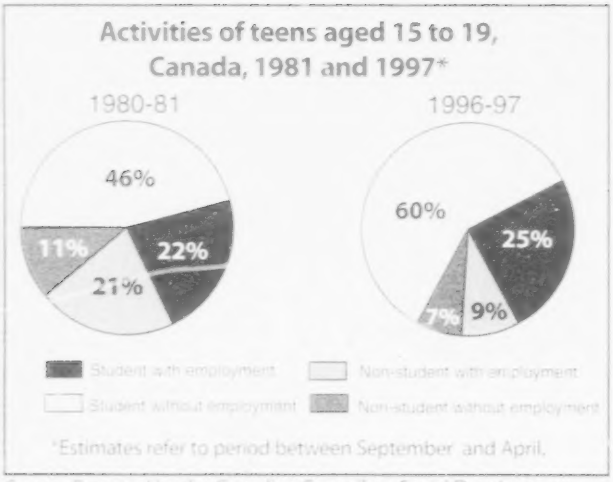
Figure 12



*Estimates refer to averages between September of reference year and the following April. 1997 estimates refer to period between September and December.

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, selected years.

Figure 13



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Annual Averages, selected years.

Researchers have also observed gender differences in the relationship between school performance and work. Among boys, those working more than 20 hours per week are more likely to drop out of school than those who are not employed. For girls, however, drop-out rates are higher among those who are not employed than among those who work more than 20 hours a week.[11] And even though girls earn less than boys, they are more likely to save their earnings for future education.[12] Both boys and girls who save their earnings for future education have higher GPAs than other students who spend their earnings on recreational activities.

Researchers have raised some questions about using GPA results to measure the impact of employment on a student's performance.[13] To protect their grades from the negative impact of employment, some students may choose courses that are less challenging. Some may even cheat on

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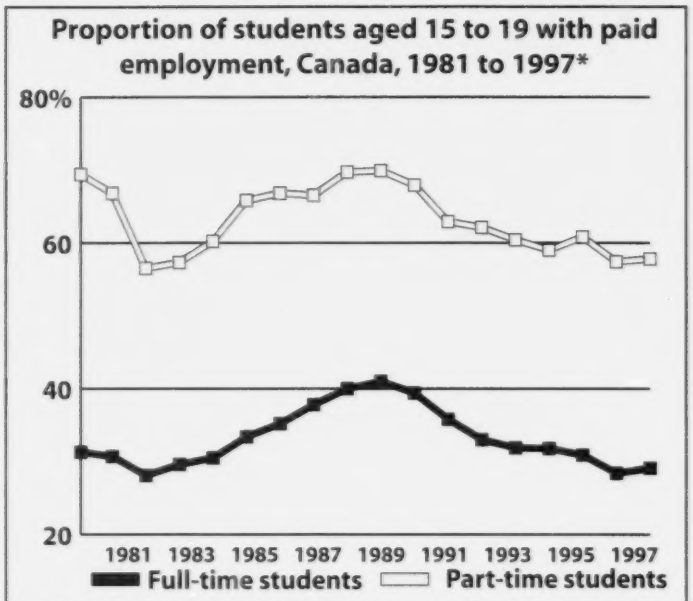

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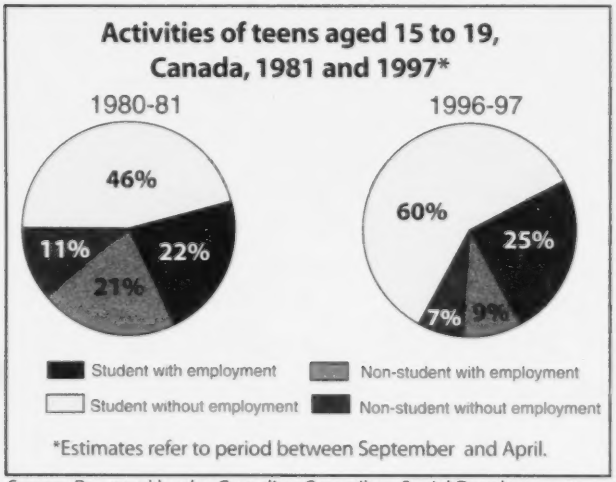

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Researchers have raised some questions about using GPA results to measure the impact of employment on a student's performance.[20] To protect their grades from the negative impact of employment, some students may choose courses that are less challenging. Some may even cheat on

exams or assignments.[21] A high GPA may simply reflect the way that students manage their school work, rather than measure their real academic achievement.

Other measures, such as time spent on homework and class attendance, may be better measures of the impact of work on school. An American longitudinal study showed that working students spend less time on homework than non-working students.[22] Working students are more likely to skip classes and to have a negative attitude towards school. According to results from a recent study on mathematics and science performance among 18-year-olds in Canada, students who spend less than one hour a day on paid employment perform better than those who spend more than five hours a week doing paid work.

Table 9. Hours worked by full-time students, Canada, 1997

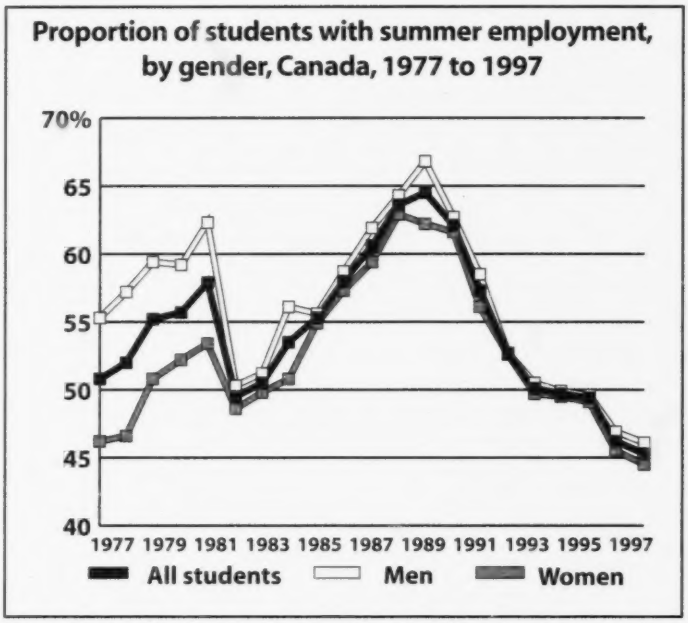
	No hours	1 to 14	15 to 19	20 or more	Total
Aged 15 to 16	80	15	3	2	100%
Aged 17 to 19	64	20	8	8	100%
Total	72	18	5	5	100%

Note: Estimates refer to the periods from January to April and September to December.
Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 1997.

The extent to which long hours of paid employment may affect school performance can be gauged using the evidence presented in Table 9. Overall, less than five per cent of all full-time students aged 15 to 16 – approximately 25,000 students – worked 15 hours or more each week. Only two per cent of full-time students in this age group usually worked 20 hours or more per week. Older students were slightly more likely to have long work hours. Among full-time students aged 17 to 19, 16 per cent – or about 92,000 – worked more than 15 hours per week, and about eight per cent worked 20 hours or more. Although the majority of employed students do not work more than 15 hours per week, for the one in six older students who do work longer hours, the problems noted above may arise. As other studies have demonstrated, among the remaining employed students, a limited amount of part-time employment does not appear to negatively affect academic performance nor put them at risk of dropping out of school before they complete high school.[24]

Evidence regarding youth employment indicates that rather than working too many hours, the biggest problem most young people face is an inability to find any paid work. As shown in Figure 14, the share of students aged 15 to 19 who had employment during the summer declined precipitously throughout the 1990s, and it is now lower than at any other point in the last two decades. This raises a significant concern, given young people's need to save money for college or university, to earn money for other expenses, and to gain work experience.

Figure 14



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Annual Averages, selected years.

SECTION FOUR – THE EFFECT OF WORK ON YOUNG PEOPLES' LIFESTYLES

A healthy lifestyle is essential for one's physical and mental well-being. Several things contribute to a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, moderate drinking, and abstention from the use of tobacco. Previous research has shown that young people who work long hours are less likely than others to exercise, and they are more likely to smoke, drink heavily or use marijuana or cocaine.[25] However, only five per cent of teen students with jobs in Canada work more than 20 hours a week, and only nine per cent of all those aged 15 to 19 have left school and found jobs. Therefore, in this section we set out to discover how working affects the lifestyle habits of the majority of teenagers with jobs – those who are also students. This is accomplished by comparing their lifestyle habits with those of students who do not have jobs. The lifestyle habits reviewed here include exercise, smoking and alcohol consumption.

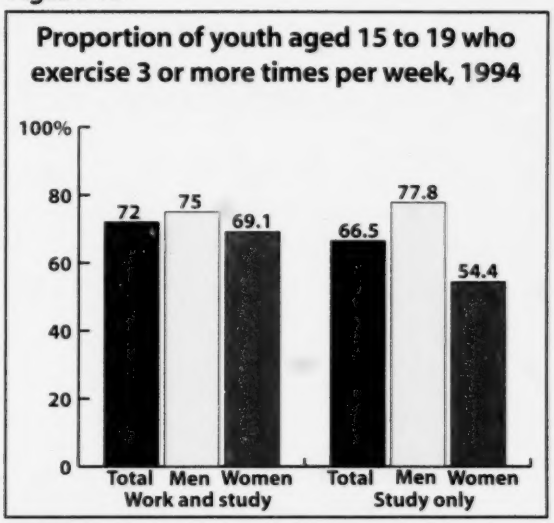
DOES WORKING REDUCE STUDENTS' LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Although it might be expected that students who combine school and work find less time for physical exercise than students without jobs, the figures show that for young women, the reverse is true. Nearly 70 per cent of female students with jobs report that they exercise three or more times per week, compared to only 54 per cent of those without jobs. However, similar proportions of male students with and without jobs report that they exercise regularly.

The data show a marked gender difference in rates of exercise, particularly among students who do not hold jobs. More than three-quarters of the young men in this group exercise regularly, compared to just over half of the young women.

There are several possible reasons that the majority of students who hold jobs also exercise regularly. First, sports are usually social activities. Working youth may be more socially active than those who attend school only. Second, having to balance work and school may enable teens to manage their time better. Third, working may instill a sense of responsibility among teens. Consequently, young people with jobs are more likely to take charge of their own physical well-being.

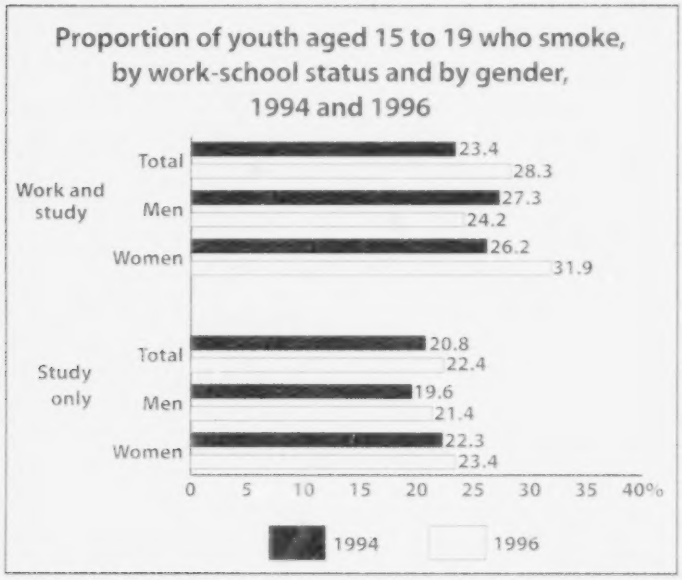
Figure 15



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Annual Averages, 1994.

Does working affect smoking and alcohol consumption among teens?

Figure 16



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey, 1994.

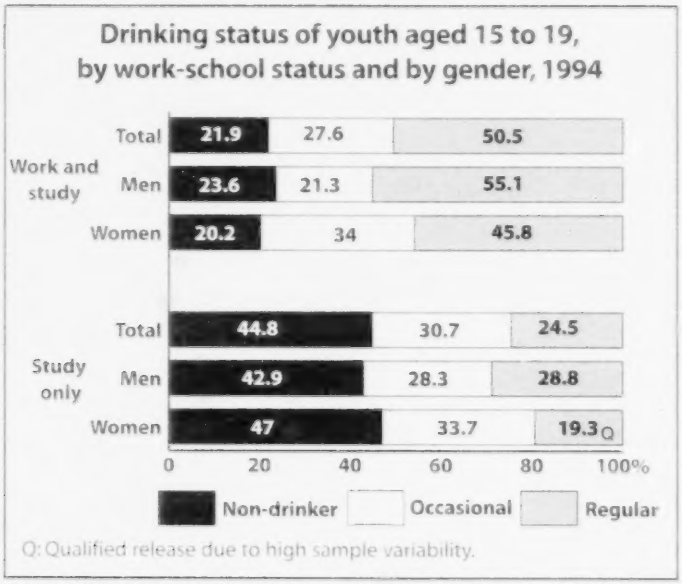
Smoking patterns

Young students who have jobs are more likely than those without jobs to smoke, but the trend varies according to gender. The rate of smoking among young female students with jobs increased from 26 per cent to 32 per cent between 1994 and 1996, but among young male students with jobs, it fell from 27 to 24 per cent. Overall, about 28 per cent of young students with jobs smoke, compared to 22 per cent of those without jobs. The significant increase in the smoking rate among female students with jobs is cause for serious concern, given that smoking is a major health hazard and a difficult habit to break. Indeed, only 36 per cent of female students with jobs quit smoking in 1996 – a rate that has fallen by 10 per cent since 1994. By comparison, 50 per cent of young male smokers with jobs quit smoking in 1996.[7]

Alcohol use

Substance abuse is one of the major non-scholastic challenges facing young people in Canada. Unfortunately, employment among teen students appears to contribute to increased alcohol consumption. Half of the teen students with jobs drink regularly (at least once a month) compared to only one-quarter of the students without jobs. While young men are less likely to be smokers, they consume more alcohol than young women. Among working students, 10 per cent more young men than women are regular drinkers, although that spread drops to four percentage points for non-working students. Further, nearly three-quarters of young male students with jobs reported at least one heavy drinking episode in the previous year, compared to half of their female counterparts. Significantly smaller proportions of teen stu-

Figure 17



Q: Qualified release due to high sample variability.

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey, 1994.

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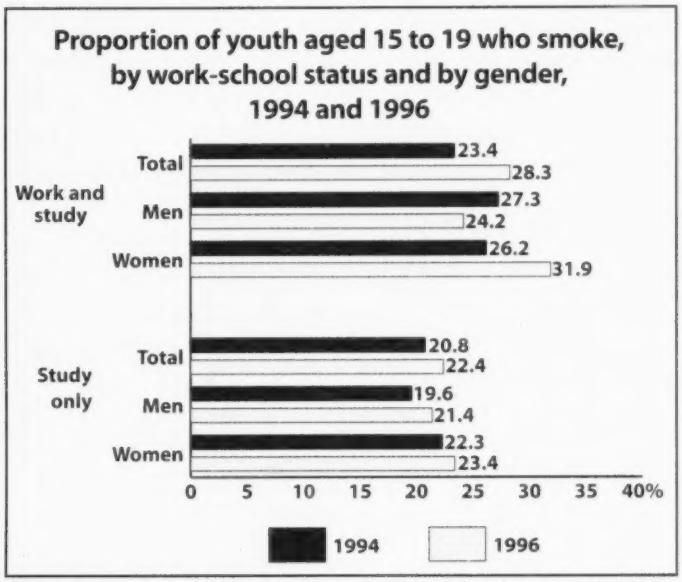

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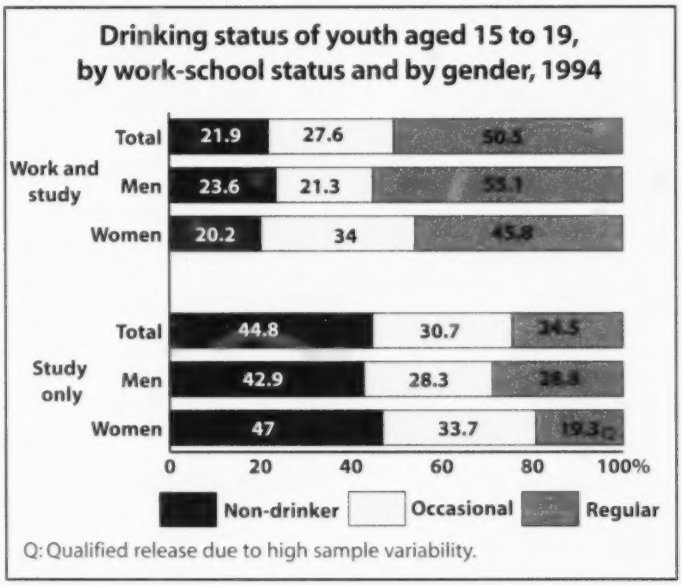
Substance abuse is one of the major non-scholastic challenges facing young people in Canada. Unfortunately, employment among teen students appears to contribute to increased alcohol consumption. Half of the teen students with jobs drink regularly (at least once a month) compared to only one-quarter of the students without jobs. While young men are less likely to be smokers, they consume more alcohol than young women. Among working students, 10 per cent more young men than women are regular drinkers, although that spread drops to four percentage points for non-working students. Further, nearly three-quarters of young male students with jobs reported at least one heavy drinking episode in the previous year, compared to half of their female counterparts. Significantly smaller proportions of teen stu-

Figure 17



Q: Qualified release due to high sample variability.

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey, 1994.

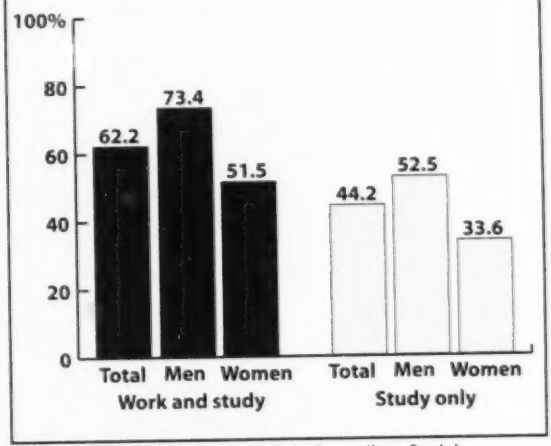
dents without jobs over-consumed alcohol at least once in the previous year – 52 per cent for young men and 33 per cent for young women.

Data on the number of times a year that young male students drink to excess also indicate the extent of this problem. Nearly one-third reported that they engaged in heavy drinking at least 12 times a year, and one-quarter more reported drinking to excess three to 11 times in one year.

Although most teens have yet to reach the legal drinking age, under-age drinking appears to be common. The majority of teen drinking occurs on weekends socializing with friends. Many teens are aware of the pressure from their peers to drink.

Figure 18

Proportion of youth aged 15 to 19 having 5 or more drinks per occasion at least once in the past year, 1994



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey, 1994.

> *"Drinking under age is OK as long as you're responsible about it."* (Sheila, 17)
>
> *"My parents let me drink. If I'm drunk, I'm responsible. If I don't come home drunk, I'm allowed."* (Rebecca, 17)
>
> *"I know people who drink every weekend, every day. Dare we say they are alcoholics and they get mad at you."* (Janell, 15)
>
> *"Some people get others completely wasted so people will laugh at them and they can hear about it the next morning."* (Tony, 18)
>
> *"At the high school dances, people show up all drugged and drunk."* (Annick, 17)
>
> *"Peer pressure. If you go to a party or something and they have beer, they keep nagging you to drink it."* (Ben, 14)

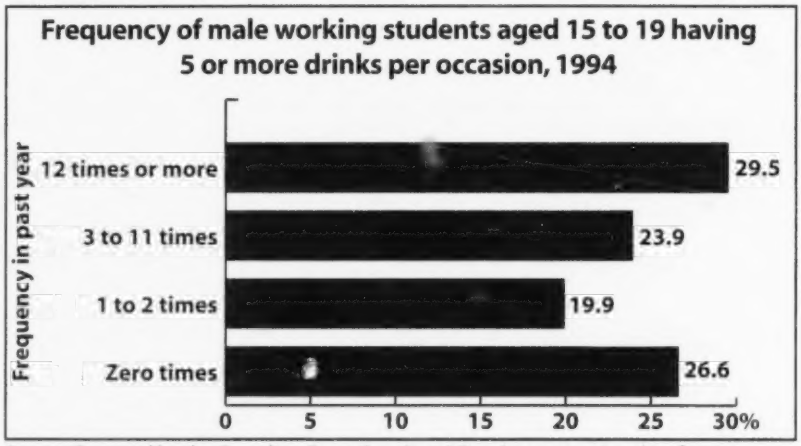
Several factors may be contributing to alcohol misuse among teens. First, the majority of teens who work have jobs in the service sector, where access to alcohol is likely the easiest. Second, for some teens, drinking is considered to be a way to rebel against adults. Third, some teens drink out of boredom. Fourth, alcohol is often used as a social lubricant and many teens may drink in order to feel less inhibited socially. Fifth, teens may regard alcohol as a buffer against stress.

Employment helps to equip youth with essential skills for adult life, such as punctuality and personal responsibility. It also helps to break down inter-generational barriers by enabling teens to interact with people outside of their peer group.[27] Balancing school and work, however, has some negative side-effects as well. Although work does not impede young people from exercising, it appears to open the door for more teens to smoke and consume alcohol.

Some researchers have suggested that these negative habits may develop because working gives rise to feelings of 'pseudo maturity' among teens. As a result, they engage in adult-like behaviour without having the responsibility and perspective that is developed in adulthood.[28] Researchers have also found that teens who work more than 15 hours per week have higher rates of aggressive behaviour and they get into trouble with the police more often. And among teens who work more than 10 hours per week, other potentially harmful effects were noted, including reduced hours of sleep, less frequent exercise, and skipping breakfast.

The message here about teens combining work and school is cautionary. Health habits may suffer, and the additional stresses that teen students take on by adding a job to their schedule may encourage more of them to smoke and drink alcohol, compared to those who are engaged only in their studies.

Figure 19



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey, 1994.

Conclusion

This review of the data, combined with anecdotal comments from Canadian teens, present us with a picture of young people's experiences with work in the late 1990s. Clearly, the ability of young people to find work, especially in their younger teen years, has diminished when compared to earlier decades. This is due to the weak economic recovery in the 1990s, as well as to changes in the nature of the jobs being created. Young people themselves are discouraged about their employment possibilities, although they are aware that increased education is important to their future job success.

While students who work more than 15 to 20 hours per week increase their risks of poor school performance and unhealthy lifestyles, those who work a moderate number of hours per week, or who hold summer employment only, seem to flourish. One major concern raised by the data is that increasingly teens are being denied the opportunity to acquire job skills, to earn their own spending money, or to earn funds for their post-secondary studies. Another is that employed teen students are increasingly turning to smoking and they continue to have higher rates of alcohol consumption than their peers without jobs. The comments by youth in focus groups suggest that alcohol and drugs are teens' biggest non-scholastic challenge, and the data indicate that the workplace adds to that challenge.

On the positive side, volunteer rates among teens and young adults have increased dramatically over the last 10 years, providing many with job-like experience. However, while volunteer work is highly beneficial – both to the volunteers and the recipients – it cannot fully replace paid work for teens because it is not financially remunerative.

Another concern from these findings is that low-income teens are less likely to acquire job experience than those from middle- and upper-income families. The same pattern is true for immigrant teens, compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. The particular barriers to the labour market that these teens face warrant further attention.

The data also make it clear that teen work is highly segregated by gender. Young women primarily work as caregivers or in retail or food services. Few young men are employed as caregivers, and although a significant proportion work in retail or food services, about half are employed in blue collar jobs in construction, farming and manufacturing. This gender-segregated nature of teen work means that the average hourly earnings of young men aged 17 to 19 are higher than those of young women. A further concern is that neither gender gains exposure to the full range of employment opportunities. This may affect their career choices in later life, perpetuating the gender-segregated nature of work that still exists for the majority of adults.

It is hoped that this portrait of the workplace challenges faced by Canada's young people will promote discussion and action. Gaining access to the labour market and learning how to balance their work and school responsibilities are major challenges facing today's young people.

Endnotes

[1] Yamoor and Mortimer, 1990

[2] Statistics Canada surveys pertinent to the labour market included only individuals aged 15 and older.

[3] Fortin, 1993; McKechnie, Lindsay, Hobbs and Lavalette, 1996

[4] Focus groups with 12- to 24-year-olds in Ottawa, Montreal and Sydney, N.S., conducted for the Canadian Council on Social Development by Ekos Research Associates Inc., September, 1998.

[5] Sunter, 1993

[6] Justus and McCracken, 1997

[7] Caron, 1997

[8] Sunter, 1993

[9] Garasky, 1995

[10] Boyd and Norris, 1995

[11] Mortimer and associates, 1990

[12] This survey did not provide separate data for 15- to 19-year-olds, therefore data for 15- to 24-year-olds were used for this section. From *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating,* Michael Hall, et. al, Ministry of Industry, August 1998.

[13] Sauvé, 1997

[14] Caron, 1997

[15] Cheng, 1995; Fortin, 1993

[16] Sunter, 1993

[17] Ruscoe et. al, 1996

[18] Sunter, 1993

[19] Ruscoe et. al, 1996

[20] Steinberg, Fegley and Dornbusch, 1993

[21] Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986

[22] Steinberg and colleagues, 1993

[23] Lewington, 1998

[24] Ruscoe et. al, 1996; Cheng, 1995; Sunter, 1993; Fortin, 1993

[25] Bachman and Schulenberg, 1993

[26] Calculations by the CCSD using the National Population Health Survey, 1994 and 1996

[27] Stephens, 1979, quoted in Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986

[28] Jessor and Jessor, 197

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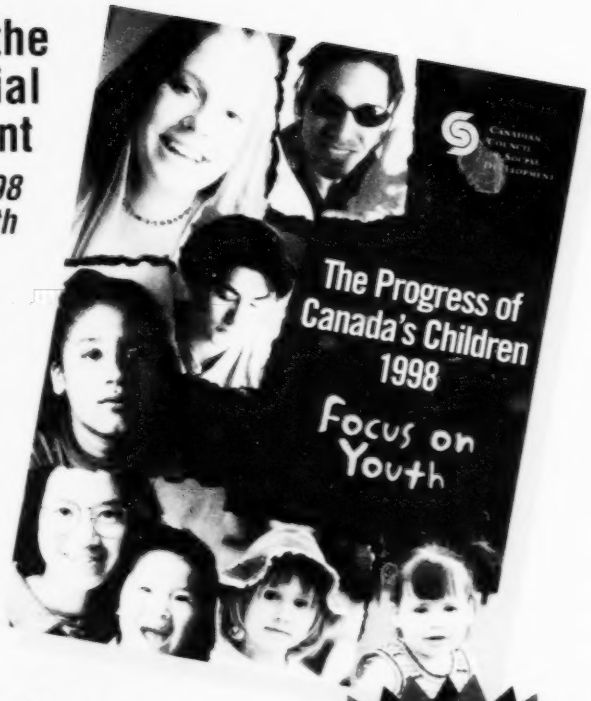

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